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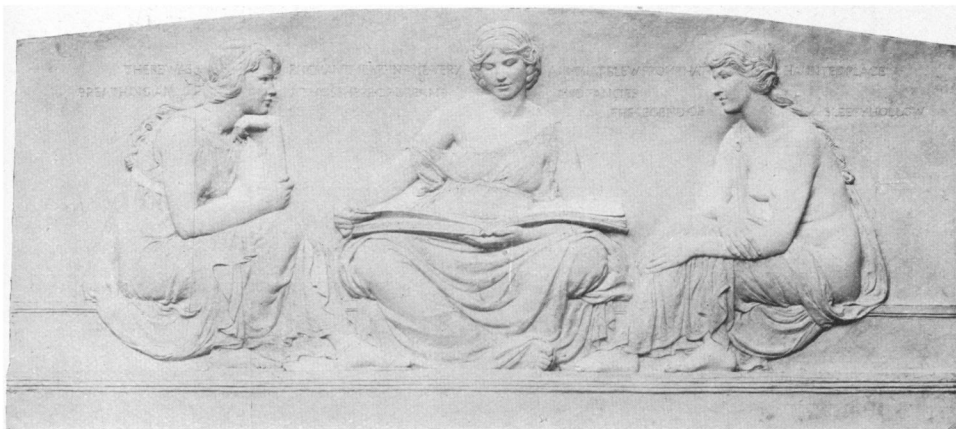
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A RELIEF

THE WASHINGTON IRVING HIGH SCHOOL

FRANCES GRIMES

A RELIEF BY FRANCES GRIMES

BY ADELINE ADAMS

THE Washington Irving High School, noted for its progressive ways of meeting the complex, changing, crying needs of secondary education for girls, has had at its head a man in whom imagination and common sense are united with a large ideal of citizenship. The great corridor at that High School's brim was something more than a corridor to him. He saw it and made others see it in the added rôle of a Municipal Gallery, where works of art or of craftsmanship could be freely shown for the use and behoof of citizens, present and future. There was a reasonable hope that the battalions of young girls daily passing through this gallery might enter their classrooms or return to their homes, attended by visions of beauty bearing directly upon their lives. That hope is now being fulfilled, or to speak more cautiously, the exhibitions are being held.

Not less important than the exhibitions are the permanent and structural adornments of such a gallery. Exhibitions wax and wane, and their effects counter-balance and supplement each other; but the school gallery itself remains a constant influence. Artists and other citizens have noted this truth, and now, through the generosity of private donors, acting in cooperation with the Board of Education and the Municipal Art Society, an interesting scheme of decoration is being executed for the Washington Irving School. Mr. Barry Faulkner's mural paintings for this purpose are at present well advanced, and will later speak for themselves in their treatment of scenes from New Netherlands history. The sole sculptural feature of the decoration is an overmantel in toned plaster. This was entrusted to Miss Frances Grimes, a sculptor well fitted by genius and training to solve the



MUNICIPAL ART GALLERY, WASHINGTON IRVING HIGH SCHOOL

COURTESY OF THE EDISON MONTHLY

any-sided problem presented to her in her theme of the Sleepy Hollow legend, to be told in sculpture, as a vital, harmonious part of the ornamentation of a hall which is at once the foyer of a Girls' High School and a Municipal Art Gallery, a fireside clime and a forum.

Miss Grimes has the inborn aptitude for the sculptor's way of recording the strength and sweetness and mystery of life, visible or invisible. Her gift, early noted and encouraged by Herbert Adams, was later developed during shining years of hard work in the studio of Augustus Saint-Gaudens, a master both sympathetic and severely critical. That studio was a workshop where all sorts of sculpture-problems were constantly being carried to solution before the eyes of the students, and with the help of their hands. Parts and wholes, figures and friezes, medals and monuments were touched and treated with impartial love. It would have been a dull disciple who would not soon have learned in this place that a chosen moderation in scale does not necessarily spell mediocrity in result, and that a little medal the size of a child's hand

may diffuse more art over the earth than a whole army of monuments of great tonnage. Naturally the vexed question of sculpture in its relation to architecture was one that here received its various answers. Miss Grimes earnestly gave her mind and hands to all such matters, little and large. In accordance with the desire of Saint-Gaudens she was selected after his death to complete the important Albright caryatids, which were among the latest designs that engrossed him.

A firm foundation of work in our own country gave peculiar value and significance to periods of independent study and travel later enjoyed by Miss Grimes in France, Italy and Greece. In fact, one of the final stages in the progress of the relief here considered was marked by an interesting sojourn at Athens. Though the sculptor returned to her clay with that priceless acquisition, "a fresh eye," it is to be noted that she did not make her Sleepy Hollow maidens more Greek than the Greeks themselves by loading them with tokens of Early Minoan civilization, Periods I, II or III, now much in evidence in our sculpture

exhibitions and further popularized by Mr. Granville Barker's *Midsummer Night* fairies. Not that I am insensible to the charm of that civilization, or of any other. We still have much to learn and enjoy from both Cretans and Chinese; and for that very reason it would be a pity if our young artists should let zeal outrun discretion, and should weave and wave Cretan and Chinese patterns into unearned discredit before our wearied eyes.

The fireplace panel assigned to Miss Grimes is just opposite the main entrance, and in its scale suggests the use of life-size figures. The shape is not the easiest in the world to fill; it is hardly wide enough from side to side for a processional treatment, as in a frieze, and by the same token it is too wide to be the Golden Oblong which poets feign is the very happiest frame for an adventure in art. No matter! Miss Grimes has regarded such difficulties as partly imaginary and wholly surmountable, and has disposed her trio of young figures in a group which sufficiently considers the rigors of the game, and at the same time diffuses that "air of enchantment" the legend bespeaks. For me, this relief remains a most satisfying example of modern American sculpture. It delights because of the fitness of theme and treatment to the purpose specified, the architectural strength of the design, the dignity, delicacy and sureness of the modeling, the harmonious rhythms of the figures and draperies; in short, because of its general state of grace as a modern classic. By classic, no one necessarily means something old, dug-up,

resuscitated, distinctly Early Ming or Middle Minoan; people knew, long before Sainte-Beuve and Pater laid down the law for them, that the works of antiquity are classic, not because they are old, but because they are energetic, fresh, "dispos." This work of Miss Grimes is fragrant with unobtruded knowledge, and is beautiful through what it hides as through what it tells. On its monumental side (for even a modest relief must in certain circumstances have such a side), it is linked with large designs previously executed by her, while in its more intimate aspect it recalls her many successful relief-portraits of distinguished personalities.

New York is a village with a strong pace of its own, and in its secondary schools, the classroom studies in art must of necessity be brief and to the point. Teachers are well aware that such studies should be something more than a series of short, sharp shocks or a sheaf of dissolving views, and now, more than ever before, they are trying to bring the fugitive, close-stripped art lesson of the classroom into friendly relations with the abiding, unlimited art lesson of the world. The Metropolitan Museum offers invaluable help here; in its halls school children are invited to be at home among masterpieces, to feel at happy ease where beauty is. And for the nation's sake, it is well that girls in the "largest high school in the world," future home-makers or wage-earners, can gather around their school hearthfire in the good company of serenity and beauty such as Miss Grimes has achieved in this decoration.

A NEW KIND OF ART SCHOOL

BY IRENE WEIR

LIKE the fabled God Janus, a modern Art School should face in two directions. It must look backward over the vista of years gathering up in its glance the finest achievements of the artist down through the ages—(we use the word advisedly, for art is as old as man). At the same time it must look forward, considering both the present and the future, if the

student is to achieve a place of honor in the world of affairs.

The prevailing idea that art is a luxury for the few, is false. That it is a necessity for every one is an easily proved fact. The artist must be alive—alive to his fingertips—and with those fingertips he must shape the imaginings of his brain, the ideals of his age into concrete form.